

Protecting Your Vision: Facts and Fiction



Whether you're nearsighted, farsighted, or have 20/20 vision, it's important to take good care of your eyes.

May is Healthy Vision month, and a good time to examine the facts—and fiction—surrounding healthy vision. Take a look at the following statements about eye safety and ask yourself: Fact or fiction?

It's legal to market decorative contact lenses as over-the-counter products—and they're safe to wear, even if an eye doctor hasn't examined them on you first.

Fiction. Decorative contact lenses are medical devices regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Places that advertise them as cosmetics or sell them without a prescription are breaking the law. Moreover, an eye doctor (ophthalmologist or optometrist) must examine each

eye to properly fit the lenses and evaluate how your eye responds to contact lens wear. A poor fit can cause serious eye damage.

Laser pointers and toys containing lasers can cause permanent eye damage.

Fact. According to Dan Hewett, health promotion officer at FDA's Center for Devices and Radiological Health, "A beam shone directly into a person's eye can injure it in an

“A beam shone directly into a person’s eye can injure it in an instant, especially if the laser is a powerful one.”

instant, especially if the laser is a powerful one.” In fact, when operated unsafely, or without certain controls, the highly-concentrated light from lasers—even those in toys—can be dangerous, causing serious eye injuries and even blindness. And not just to the person using a laser, but to anyone within range of the laser beam.

Eating lots of carrots is good for your vision.

Fact. Carrots are a good food for healthy eyesight because they contain carotenoids, which are precursors of vitamin A, a nutrient important to your eyes. However, a well-balanced diet can contain lots of foods that offer similar benefits, such as other darkly colored fruits and vegetables like peas and broccoli. Eating a well-balanced diet also helps you maintain a healthy weight, which makes you less likely to develop obesity-related diseases such as Type 2 diabetes, the leading cause of blindness in adults.

Sitting too close to movie, television, and computer screens will damage your eyes.

Fiction. According to the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO), watching televisions, including flat screens, can’t cause your eyes any physical harm. The same is true for using the computer too much or watching 3-D movies. AAO says your eyes may feel more tired if you sit too close to the TV or spend a lot of time working at the computer, but you can fix that by giving your eyes a rest.

It’s okay to use an over-the-counter eye redness reliever every day.


Fiction. According to FDA’s Wiley Chambers, M.D., doctors don’t recommend long term use of redness-alleviating drops. Although initially they help to constrict the blood vessels in the eyes (getting the so-called “red” out), continued use leads to a rebound effect. After continued use, the drops

can become the reason that your eyes are red. It is best to use them just for a day or two, Chambers says.

Smoking increases your risk of developing macular degeneration.

Fact. Smoking is a major risk factor for developing macular degeneration, a disease that gradually destroys sharp, central vision. Other risk factors include genetics, diet, exposure to bright sunlight, cardiovascular disease, and hypertension (high blood pressure). [FDA](#)

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